RESOLUTION NUMBER:  24    APPROVED

SOURCE:   COMMITTEE ON BRUCELLOSIS

SUBJECT MATTER:  WINTER FEEDING OF ELK AND BISON IN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE AREA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Free ranging elk and bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) represent the last reservoir of  
Brucella abortus in the United States and create a risk of repeated transmission of brucellosis to  
livestock.

Supplemental winter feeding of wild elk and bison has been practiced for decades in parts of the GYA  
for several reasons. Primary among these is to maintain higher elk populations to prevent commingling  
of brucellosis infected wildlife with livestock and to allow vaccination of elk.

However, there is significant evidence that winter feeding creates abnormal animal densities and  
distributions associated with increased prevalence of, and transmission potential for (both intra and  
inter species), density dependent diseases such as brucellosis. Winter feeding perpetuates and  
exacerbates the very disease such management is attempting to control and at best is only partially  
effective at preventing transmission to livestock as evidenced by recent transmission events.

The Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee, comprised of state and federal wildlife  
and agriculture agencies of the GYA, reached consensus that wildlife feeding is contrary to effective  
disease elimination and control and issued a position statement that no new winter feedgrounds should  
be established.

Wild ungulate feeding in the GYA is contrary to the goal of reducing brucellosis transmission and  
should therefore be eventually eliminated. The United States Animal Health Association recognizes  
that phasing out of wild ungulate winter feeding in the GYA will need to be performed in a manner that  
maintains the balance between wild population abundance and available native forage across the  
landscape, and should include other concurrent actions to manage livestock feed depredation and  
commingling.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the wildlife agencies of the Greater Yellowstone  
Area (GYA) states to not establish additional public or private feedgrounds and consider decreasing  
and eventually phasing out winter feeding of elk and bison in the GYA.

RESPONSE:

Idaho Dept of Fish and Game
IDFG supports your association's goal of reducing the risk of brucellosis transmission and we are committed  
to maintaining a cooperative working relationship with ISDA to implement solutions that meet the needs of
livestock producers and fulfills our statutory authority to manage wildlife for the benefit of Idaho citizens.

**Wyoming Game and Fish Dept**
This is an issue of utmost importance to the people of Wyoming. The Department continues to explore options to reduce or eliminate feeding on a case-by-case basis and will continue to work toward finding solutions to this complex problem.